



HOUSE MAJORITY OFFICE

Representative Carlos Lopez – Cantera, Majority Leader

MAJORITY MEMO

MEMORANDUM

TO: Republican Members of the Florida House of Representatives

FROM: Carlos Lopez-Cantera, Majority Leader

DATE: November 19, 2010

RE: HB 981: Citrus Assessment

During this week's Special Session, we provided much needed relief to Florida's citizens. Among our accomplishments was the protection of farmers from losing their agricultural classification and having to pay higher property taxes. Following the veto override of HB 981 Agriculture, several members have relayed constituent concerns over the portion of the bill dealing with the Citrus Assessment. In light of these concerns, we have provided the following additional information on HB 981.

Please feel free to contact the Majority Office if you have any further questions at (850) 488-1993.

HB 981 MAJORITY MESSAGE POINTS

- **HB 981 does not include a tax imposed by the Legislature on Florida's citizens.** What it does include is a self-imposed assessment on the citrus industry, by the citrus industry.
- Facing a host of challenges, including weather and diseases, Florida's citrus growers voted in November 1991 to enact a citrus research order imposing an assessment on all Florida citrus (except limes) to support citrus research necessary to the survival of this important and traditional industry in Florida.
- Monies collected from the assessment go toward helping researchers solve industry production problems, particularly to research projects aimed at addressing diseases and pests threatening the citrus industry.
- In recent years, the threats to the survival of Florida's citrus industry have escalated dramatically. In addition to continued losses due to weather events, the hurricanes of 2004 and 2005 dramatically increased the incidence of Citrus Canker, leading to the abandonment of Florida's attempts to eradicate this disease. A host of additional diseases and pests, including Citrus Greening, Citrus Black Spot, and the Mediterranean Fruit Fly, now threatens the industry's future.



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- In 2006, the Florida Legislature dismantled the Citrus Canker eradication program in favor of a comprehensive strategy of minimizing the impact of diseases and pests on production to allow Florida's citrus to be marketed to other states and countries. This plan is dependent upon the development of new disease and pest management strategies, and research is the key to developing these tactics.
- **In 2009, citrus growers voted (76% in favor) to continue the citrus research assessment and to increase the amount imposed from one cent per box to a maximum of three cents per box.**
- However, when the citrus research assessment was created in 1991, the law reflected the one cent limit originally approved by Florida's citrus growers. The citrus industry asked the Florida Legislature to update Florida law to reflect the results of the latest referendum.
- **HB 981 does not increase the citrus research assessment. It replaces the one cent per box cap with a citrus industry determined cap established in the marketing order that must be approved by referendum vote of citrus growers every six years.**

